

Literacy & Evangelism International
THE MESSENGER
EUROPE EDITION

Celebrating 50 Years

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Issue #1

“We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.”

Psalm 78:4b NIV

BOB BIEDERMAN



Europe is the second smallest continent in the world. Its inhabitants number more than 743 million people (12% of the world's population). Within its borders some of the great empires in history emerged: the Roman, British, Spanish, and Russian. It gave birth to several pillars of western civilization including democracy, philosophy, medicine and science.

Europe is also the nursery of Christianity where centuries of Christian tradition was nurtured. The apostle Paul wrote in the first century to churches scattered throughout Greece, Italy, and Turkey. Today, while three-fourths of Europeans would identify as Christians, most are relativistic in their outlook. Sadly, the biblical message seems antiquated and irrelevant to many modern Europeans.

Yet, Literacy & Evangelism International (LEI) is making inroads in Europe. In the 1990s, Dr. Bob Rice focused on developing Bible-content primers in a number of Eastern European languages.

Today, our European Director Georg Ort and his wife Martha are discovering a growing interest in Literacy & Evangelism materials, especially among churches, missions, and Christian organizations reaching out to the “Roma” (Gypsies). Over the past four years, the Orts have conducted workshops to train people how to use LEI materials in several countries, and they have responded to requests to develop additional primers in German, Macedonian, and most recently, modern Greek. LEI's simple primers help the illiterate learn the basics of reading as they encounter simplified stories about Jesus. The books are tools for discipleship and evangelism.

Georg and Martha spend several months each year in Europe developing materials and partnerships, and training teachers. They are doing an amazing work as you will see in this Europe Edition. Please pray for the growing work in Europe and the requests for assistance on the continent.

“Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” (Matthew 7:7-8, NIV)

Rev. Bob Biederman, Managing Director of N. America and Europe

GEORG ORT



“In the last few months we have seen renewal in our literacy ministry. I have six students, and two, Gheorghe and Sorana, are particularly faithful. On Sunday, Gheorghe received a diploma for completing the first book of 23 (reading) lessons. I am super proud of his dedication, as he could only read one letter when he started, but on Sunday he stood before our church and read Psalm 119:105. (Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path - NIV). He has been key in encouraging other students to begin lessons.” These inspiring words came from one of LEI's International Literacy Training Institute (ILTI) alumni, currently serving as a missionary in Romania.

In the past few years literacy ministry has not only opened the ability of reading God's word to Gheorghe, a Roma living in Romania, but has shared the gift of reading with many people in Roma communities across Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

Pastors in Bulgaria have also expressed an increasing desire to reach out to illiterate Roma communities in their country. An estimated 800,000 Roma currently living in Bulgaria comprise a significant ethnic minority with formidable educational and social challenges. This year we have planned a teacher-training workshop to prepare more literacy leaders to reach non-readers.

As refugees and immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia move to seek safety and new hope in Europe, opportunities for European churches and ministries increase. Europeans are helping these new arrivals adjust to new cultures; learn the new language of their adopted country; and most importantly, understand the Gospel: the good news about Jesus' love, which gives a hope and safety that no new country can provide.

The need is great. Thank you for your prayers, your encouragement, and your support. Your partnership in reaching communities in Europe through literacy evangelism is so much appreciated.

Together for His glory,

Georg Ort, Europe Director



Celebrating 50 Years of Ministry

FOCUS ON THE ROMA OF EUROPE



The late Dr. Robert F. Rice with the first class of students who used the Albanian primer, Dritarta.

In the late 1990s, Dr. Robert Rice, founder of Literacy & Evangelism International, peppered his ministry prayer letters with news about primer and literacy program development across Europe. Albania, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom all were stops he added to his around-the-world itinerary with one purpose in mind. Dr. Rice desired to share the loving message of Jesus Christ and the gift of literacy with the Roma (Romani/Gypsies) of Europe. Scattered throughout many European countries, these once-nomadic people were persecuted, maligned, and impoverished for centuries.

Dr. Rice's empathy for the "poorest of the poor" inspired him to develop literacy programs all over the world. Numerous requests turned his focus to Europe. "I am teaching Gypsies in the Hungarian language. They want to learn to read... I haven't any materials," wrote a literacy worker from Romania. A Bulgarian shared, "There are many people in our churches who cannot read the Word of God or write. Most of them are with Gypsy background – children and adults. Some try to memorize whole passages from the Scripture but regular reading of the Bible is only a dream for most of them... An elderly Gypsy man, brother Rusi, told us that he always brings with him the New Testament and wherever he stops for a while – at the bus stop or at the shop – he asks people next to him to read some verses from it. But that cannot be acceptable for younger people! ...No school will accept them... there is nobody to help teach them to read and write. We are deeply convinced that we have to start."

Dr. Rice had a plan to bring hope to the Roma. As was his practice elsewhere, he found committed people to be literacy

The LEI Messenger: Europe Edition 2018

champions for primer construction and training projects in each European country. Once specific advanced preparation work was complete, an indigenous primer construction team assembled, which Dr. Rice would arrive to lead. A week or two of intensive work would create a primer draft of 35 literacy lessons, 11 health and agricultural lessons, 26 easy to read Bible lessons, and artwork to make 72 illustrated reading lessons for each two-book series. Finally, the manuscript was brought back to Tulsa (USA) for review, for computer input, and for correction before field-testing and printing.

"I worked first in the national language, Romanian," Dr. Rice wrote, "with a well-motivated and capable team of six Bible Institute students and a very efficient secretary/typist who used the computer to get things in order - five and a half days and evenings. The students worked hard and surprised me with a strong finish."

Working with the Bible Society was more challenging. "Neither of the two professors I worked with could understandably communicate in English. I needed a minimum of five people on the team – and had only two – so I had to write out the manuscript, and keep word control... However, they were the best in the Gypsy language, Romani, and one of the four days we worked together – we worked non-stop from nine am to eight pm... Pointing to English words in the dictionary they could not pronounce, we completed the first 34 lessons. Now they have 26 Bible condensation lessons to finish, and they know how to do it. And there will be more for them, but at least all of the creative writing (Lessons 1-32) was done, and the primers can be finished and checked by fax or e-mail."

In the end, six primers were constructed in Europe during the final five years of Dr. Rice's life: Bulgarian in 1998; Romani, Romanian, and Hungarian in 1999; Albanian and Shqip (for Albania) in 2000.

In Albania, a literacy worker wrote, "We started literacy classes in one of the poorest areas of the Capital, using the Bible-content primer realized under Dr. Robert Rice... We thank all of you praying for us. Our first ten students, 14-19 year-old boys, wrote the first word in their life... Dritar's hand was shaking just like a kid in elementary school. I will never forget the joy when they read the first lesson. Life had been very hard to them... When we read the first verse from the Bible, I was happy to think that in a couple of months they will read the Word of God themselves."

Many people, young and old, have come to know the Lord because of one man's vision. "The disparity between work waiting to be done and available workers is staggering," Dr. Rice wrote nearly 20 years ago. "I am sending you to harvest crops in fields where others have done all the hard work" (John 4:38, CEV).

DOOR TO LIGHT: MACEDONIAN PRIMER



Macedonian primer construction team members: (l-r, standing) Tefik, Dragan, Bob Biederman (LEI's Managing Director for North America & Europe), Igor, Georg Ort (LEI's Europe Director); (l-r, seated) Anastasia, Svetlana, Martha Ort (LEI Missionary), and Virginia Newton (LEI Affiliate).

Macedonian pastors working among the Gypsies expressed a need for a Bible-content primer to teach adults and children how to read and write in the Macedonian language. With much work and determination, their prayers have been answered. The Macedonian primer, *Door to Light*, was constructed in May 2017. Bob Biederman (LEI Managing Director for North America and Europe), Georg (Europe Director) and Martha Ort, and Virginia Newton (LEI Affiliate serving in Bulgaria), along with six nationals, made up the primer construction team. Book 1 is comprised of thirty lessons. Book 2 has 42 lessons including 12 health and agriculture lessons with 26 Bible stories, making a total of 72 lessons in all. Working six days - morning, afternoon, and some evenings - the team miraculously completed the two primers by 6pm on the very last day of the workshop. Brother Dragan, leader of the Macedonian Primer Construction Team, wrote: "I liked the team work and the goal we had all together for the kingdom of God. Your team and the Macedonian team did a great job putting it all together. I liked the commitment of all to this project... Thanks to God for all the team and the team behind in the U.S. for preparing all of this. This project will be a great blessing for Macedonia."

SLIVEN, BULGARIA TEACHER TRAINING WORKSHOP



Teacher Training Workshop participants, Bulgaria Tania (ILTI 2012) is third from the left.

A literacy tutor training workshop was held in Sliven, Bulgaria, by two LEI International Literacy Training Institute graduates, Tania Konyarova (ILTI 2012) and Virginia Newton (ILTI 2000). Virginia instructed with the help of a translator. Nine students were trained and several have begun literacy classes in their own churches. One participant, a pastor's wife in a Roma church, holds reading classes for church members.

We praise the Lord that the new literacy classes in Topolchane are providing learning opportunities for children, women, and men under the direction of Pastor Mitko and his wife Raina.

ROMANIA TEACHER TRAINING WORKSHOP (TTW)

Luke and Kim Warner graduated from LEI's International Literacy Training Institute in 2008. Most recently Luke was the main teacher at a Teacher Training Workshop with the Smiles Foundation, the foundation's first, in Romania. With English as his first language, Luke embraced the additional challenge of leading this training in the Romanian language, teaching five literacy leaders "to teach others the art of reading" in their native language. One literacy leader has already started teaching reading in a homeless community, putting what she learned into practice.

LEI'S LITERACY PRIMERS CREATION TIMELINE

1967

Literacy & Evangelism is founded...

1970s

1980s

Spanish - Spain '88
English - United Kingdom '89
Total = 2

1990s

Portuguese - Portugal '95
Passport to the World of English (ESL) '96
Turkish - Turkey '96
Bulgarian - Bulgaria '98
Romani - Romania '99
Romanian - Romania '99
Hungarian - Hungary '99
Total = 7



Svetle helps a six-year-old learn to read in Sophia, Bulgaria

PRIMERS FOR EUROPE 1967 - 2018

2000s

Albanian - Albania '00
French - France '00
Shqip - Albania '00
Kazakh - Kazakhstan '04
Using Everyday English '08
Total = 5

2010s

German - Germany '15
Macedonian - Macedonia '17
Total = 2

Total

16
Primers for
Europe

2017

The future
holds endless
opportunities...



European Language Primers and more are available for free download from our website.

For more information about all of LEI's free online literacy primers, please visit

[HTTPS://WWW.LITERACYEVANGELISM.ORG/PRIMERS](https://www.literacyevangelism.org/primers)

To explore LEI's online training opportunities, please visit

[HTTPS://WWW.LITERACYEVANGELISM.ORG/GET-INVOLVED/TRAINING](https://www.literacyevangelism.org/get-involved/training)

A new website in German has been created. You can visit it at

[HTTP://WWW.LESENLEARNEN-MIT-DER-BIBEL.DE](http://www.lesenlernen-mit-der-bibel.de)



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from Noun Project



Celebrating 50 Years of Ministry



Don Edic, LEI's Senior English Language Ministry Consultant, visited Bulgaria to train literacy champions to lead English Language Ministries throughout Europe.

English Language Ministry

Rev. Don Edic, LEI's Senior English Language Ministry Consultant and California resident, has been working with Literacy & Evangelism International for over 30 years. He attended Marti Lane's first English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher Training Workshop in Tulsa, Oklahoma, when Marti launched her "new" ESL materials, *Passport to the World of English* (PWE) in 1995. Don spent the next 22 years honing his skills, responding to churches in need of ESL training around the world, and developing English Language Ministry curriculum. *Nation to Nations* is a tool Don created to be used for short-term mission trips, and *Using Everyday English* (UEE) is a curriculum used to reach out to non-English speaking refugees. In the past five years alone, Don has led English Language Ministry training workshops in Derby, England; Dobromilka, Bulgaria; Nuremberg, Germany; London, England; and elsewhere across the globe.

Countless lives have been directed to the loving gospel message of Jesus Christ as Don encourages church leaders and shares the teaching and ministry tools of LEI's Bible-based ESL curricula, much of which he has created.

**Can't afford the time or money to come to Tulsa for instruction?
Curious about LEI's online ESL training opportunities?**

Here are several FREE classes you will want to explore:

Overseas Literacy Teacher Training

This class will prepare you to teach people to read and write in their native (non-English) language, using LEI methods and primers. The class is taught in English.

<https://www.literacyevangelism.org/get-involved/training/overseas-non-english-literacy-teacher-training-online>

How to Use Video Calls to Tutor Literacy and English

A free, two-hour, instructor-led interactive webinar developed and led by Dr. Melina Gallo.

<https://www.literacyevangelism.org/get-involved/training/how-use-video-calls-tutor-literacy-and-english-online>

Introduction to Mother Tongue Literacy

Another newly released, FREE, online course hosted through our partners at Crosswired.com.

This self-paced course talks about the impact of illiteracy and introduces LEI's approach to sharing the love of Jesus through the gift of reading.

<https://www.literacyevangelism.org/get-involved/training/introduction-mother-tongue-literacy-online>

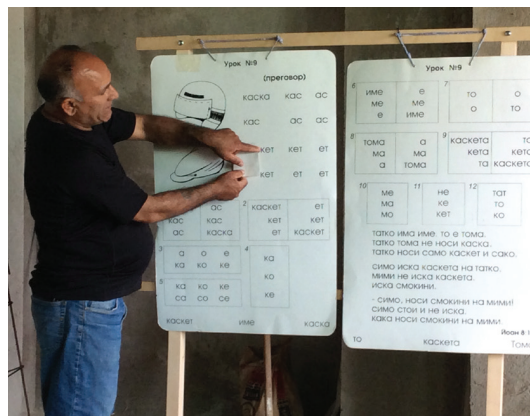
Georg & Martha Ort Celebrate 20 Years of LEI Ministry



Georg Ort, Europe Director, presented LEI's ministry at the International Roma Forum in Sliven, Bulgaria.



The Fall of 1997 was a significant time for us, marking the beginning of a new chapter in our lives. We had finished 17 years of serving through health care ministries in Thailand, Nepal, and Pakistan. We had married and our three children were born in “the East” during that time. By the time we sensed God’s leading back to “the West” we had also begun homeschooling and desired to continue this after resettling. As we considered our move, we also realized that there was no better place for homeschooling than the United States. For Martha it was a homecoming, and for Georg it meant emigrating to a new country and somewhat different culture.



Pastor Mitko taught an adult literacy class in Bulgaria.



LEI Affiliate Virginia Newton led a Teacher Training Workshop with the help of a translator.

We had expected to find employment in the nursing or health care sector, but, through several circumstances God providentially opened the door into a different sphere of ministry through Literacy & Evangelism International (LEI). The then director of LEI, Rev. John Taylor, a dear friend and former missionary colleague in Asia, was instrumental in our “career change.” He encouraged us to make the shift from helping people with physical eye problems to helping them see with their “spiritual eyes,” enabling them to access Scripture.

Being involved in helping non-readers acquire the ability to read and sharing the Gospel with them in the process, has been exciting and fulfilling over the past 20 years, both in the office as administrator and on the field in Europe. We hope to continue in this worthy ministry for years to come; to see those who were once illiterate read God’s Word, the Bible, for themselves - and watch as people grow in their faith or come to know Christ as Savior and Lord for the first time.

~ Georg Ort, LEI’s Europe Director

Georg Ort and his wife Martha are a blessing to literacy missions. We thank the Lord for their many fruitful years of ministry with LEI.

LEI’s Bible-based English Language Curriculum - *Using Everyday English, Passport to the World of English*, and *Nation to Nations* can be found at <https://store.literacyevangelism.org>



Celebrating 50 Years of Ministry

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18 (NASB)

PLEASE PRAY:

- MON** For new LEI missionaries who have a vision and heart to serve the Lord in Europe through literacy evangelism.
- TUES** For Bulgaria: Pastor Mitko and his wife Raina, Tania Konyarova, and LEI Affiliate Virginia Newton as they use literacy evangelism to share the gift of reading and the love of Jesus with the Roma people.
- WED** For Germany: that the German primer and German as a Second Language course will help reach the immigrant and refugee population with the Gospel through local churches.
- THURS** For Greece: for Luciana working on the final edit and field-testing of the recently constructed Greek language primer.
- FRI** For Romania: the Smiles ministry, LEI affiliates Luke and Kim Warner, and literacy evangelism work in Romania.
- SAT** For Macedonia: that the primer constructed in Macedonian be used to draw many into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and to encourage those who already know Jesus as Lord.
- SUN** Thank the Lord for LEI’s 50-year heritage of literacy and evangelism ministry, and ask for wisdom and blessing regarding future endeavors such as the International Literacy Training Institute 2018.

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY TRAINING INSTITUTE 2018

Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA

June 9 - July 14, 2018 (5 weeks)

For more detailed information about Literacy Trainings and Digital Resources, please see our website.

<https://www.literacyevangelism.org/get-involved/training>

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Would your church like someone to make a mission presentation?

Please contact our President: SidRice@LiteracyInternational.net



Enhancing Trust



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Literacy & Evangelism International (LEI) equips the Church to share the message of Jesus Christ through the gift of reading.

We develop Bible-content materials to teach basic reading in local languages and conversational English.

We train church leaders and missionaries to use LEI materials for evangelism, discipleship, and church planting.